

447/360
3
The Resurrection of the Body, deduced from
the Resurrection of CHRIST, and illustra-
ted from His Transfiguration.

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY's,
On EASTER-MONDAY, MARCH 31, 1777.

By ROBERT HOLMES, M. A.
FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE IN OXFORD.

THE SECOND EDITION.

O X F O R D :

Printed for D. PRINCE and J. COOKE.

And Sold by Mess. RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Church-Yard,
LONDON.

M DCC LXX IX.

THIS DISCOURSE would not have been offered to the public, but in compliance with the request, conveyed to me in the following note:

REVEREND SIR,

THE Satisfaction, which your Sermon on Easter-Monday afforded your hearers, has induced some of them, and amongst those your anonymous Well-Wisher, to desire to see it in print; as he is persuaded it will do you credit, and, what is of more consequence, throw new light upon that important doctrine, the Resurrection. While the enemies of our Faith are ever infusing their poison of Scepticism into the minds of the unwary, we should not be too backward in endeavouring to furnish incautious Youth with an antidote.

I am,

REVEREND SIR,

Your very humble Servant,

PHILALETHES.

I AM encouraged to hope, that a request, intimated in this manner, will be admitted as an apology for the present publication : and I am indeed the more inclined to flatter myself that it will stand as a sufficient excuse, because an obedience to this application was the only way left, of shewing the sense I entertained of his and their favour, who have done me the honour to make it. To all those, who may have taken favourable notice of this Discourse, it is therefore, with much grateful deference, presented : with the assurance, that I shall always think myself very happy if I can obtain their approbation by the endeavour to deserve it.

I am,

With much Respect,

Their very humble Servant,

ROBERT HOLMES.

PHILIPP. CHAP. iii. Ver. 21.

WHO SHALL CHANGE OUR VILE BODY,
 THAT IT MAY BE FASHIONED LIKE
 UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY.

IN these words, St. Paul seems to refer as fully and distinctly to the Resurrection, as in any passage of his Epistles. They are declaratory, not only of a resurrection from the dead, but also of a resurrection of the body. Although these terms may be considered by Many as equivalent, yet Some have endeavoured to establish a material distinction between them, and have accordingly defended the notion of a resurrection from the dead, independent of the constituent fact, a resurrection of the body. But the words of the Apostle seem to contradict this theory, and a particular enquiry into their meaning may possibly afford some clear insight into the nature of that great truth, to which they are supposed to relate.

A

Now

Now the Fashion of Christ's "glorious Body," if it be made the standard of that Glory, which shall be impressed on the person of Man by the change of his "vile Body," must be, it should seem, the Fashion of Christ's raised Body. But consequences can never be true, if premises are false. We cannot resemble the Body of Christ's resurrection, if Christ be not risen—for if He "be not risen, then is there no resurrection." These two points, therefore, demand properly some reflections, introductory to that application, for which, it is presumed, the Apostle intended the words of the Text.

ACCORDING to a common remark, the credibility of the whole Christian Scheme rests upon the certainty of Christ's resurrection. That we find this miracle confirmed with stronger evidence, than any other, therefore seems not the effect of accident; and the appearance there is, that the Providence of God has been particularly vigilant in this respect, may be received, in the judgment of a few, as no weak argument in support of the fact.

THERE are two ways by which the credibility of facts may be established; either by demon-

demonstrating the strength of that testimony, which is produced in their favour: or by shewing the weakness of those arguments, which are insisted on with a view to impeach their credit. At present some use will be made of both these methods.

It must be admitted, even by unbelievers, that the individual Person, whom Christians distinguish by the titles of God and Saviour, was really put to death, and, after His suffering, that His Body was openly deposited in the tomb. They will also grant, what it is indeed against their cause to deny, that every human precaution was taken to make His "sepulchre sure." All these things happened, at a time, when Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers, assembled for the purpose of celebrating the Passover. It was nevertheless boldly asserted by a Few, that this same Person was returned to life, and that He "shewed himself openly" among men, confirming the fact of His resurrection by every possible evidence.

This appears to be a fair state of the point, in support of which, no other concessions, than these, are supposed to be necessary. For those proofs, which are yet wanting, we are

content to depend upon the testimony of those Men, who declare that they severally saw and heard Him, after He was risen, and were continually favored with the most palpable assurances of His return to life.

AMONG the chief of these, may be reckoned that Apostle, upon whom, as upon a Rock, it was promised that the Church of Christ should be built. He was the most zealous of those, who first asserted their Lord's resurrection. He had made an early visit to the sepulchre, and upon stooping down, and "seeing the linen clothes lying," without finding the Body, we read that he "departed, "wondering in himself." If he had embarked in any scheme of fraud, he needed not to repair to the sepulchre for intelligence; and if any such design had been adopted, and carried into execution by the Disciples, it was surely astonishing, that the Principal among them should be unacquainted with their scheme, or their success.

THERE appears then no danger in resting the whole on this single point — it is enough if St. Peter uniformly persisted in asserting his Master's resurrection. There could be no room either for credulity, on the one hand,
or

or fraud, on the other : the fact, which he declared, depended upon a species of evidence, necessarily exempt from the danger of misinformation. We must take his senses for our vouchers, and shall, it is apprehended, feel ourselves obliged to believe their report.

No point is herein taken for granted, which it is conceived easy to deny. The matter, asserted by this Apostle, was not any effect, dependent on the operation of his understanding—if it had been, he might, it must be confessed, have judged improperly—he might have been deceived. But it was an object of his senses, a positive and perspicuous fact. It was not the doubtful result of inference or argument—he had no alternative ; whether he was credulous or obstinate, he must believe it.

Nothing more then seems to be wanted, than the assurance that he was sincere, and that he had really seen, and conversed with Christ after His rising from the dead. Now the experience of all those, who declared the resurrection of Christ, had been sufficient to convince them, that the prejudices of their countrymen were highly unfavorable to their story. The ministry of their Master had, even before their
own

own eyes, subjected Him to a cruel death, which they were all even afraid to behold, and much more to share. From the example of their Lord, they had reason to expect the like sanguinary persecution, if they should dare to assert His resurrection. The bare apprehension of suffering had driven them all into flight, and had induced St. Peter to deny his Master in the most violent terms of abjuration : and this Apostle was afterwards particularly assured, by the express prediction of his Master, that an avowal of the Truth, would expose him to the pains of a bitter death. When he gave forth his testimony, under such apprehension, it might be said, such certainty of suffering, as this, his sincerity can hardly be questioned. Since very few will lay down their lives, even for Truth, it must be unreasonable to imagine, that St. Peter would struggle with those very fears, which had so lately subdued him, and brave that death, from which he had fled before, in support of wilful and deliberate Falshood.

It is not intended to infer, that the sufferings of St. Peter, and of the other Disciples, are, alone, sufficient proofs of the truth of their story. But they seem to prove one thing unquestionably,

questionably, that the Disciples were sincere, and that they meant to assert no more than Truth; and then, if the fact, which they reported, depended on their senses, which could not, in the present instance, be easily misled, it appears not unfair to conclude, that their report is true.—These remarks appear sufficiently strong to establish three positions: That, St. Peter and the Disciples could not be mistaken in the identity of Christ, if they believed that they had conversed with Him after his death:—and, that it was their own firm belief, that they had conversed with Him after His death—and therefore, that Christ did really rise from the dead.

THE deduction, thus insisted on, and established by Many much more ably, presses with too much force upon the mind to be easily resisted. But, when direct contradiction could hardly be ventured upon, this inference has been assailed at a distance, and attempts have been made to weaken its credit, by resources drawn from philosophical theory. Since the restoration of a dead body to life contradicts the positive laws of Nature, an unanswerable objection, as some imagine, stands in the way. The general and regular
tenor

tenor of the operations of Nature, in respect of the dead, will overthrow the credibility of any fact, that contradicts it, if supported only by human testimony. This is indeed a formidable objection, and tears up all our evidence by the roots. But, if a resurrection of Christ's Body, as breaking the regularity of Nature, is therefore incredible, so is also the raising of the Widow's Son by Elijah, and of the Shunamite's Child by Elisha. These miracles were wrought by the Power of God, upon the prayer of men, who were received as Prophets by the Jews themselves. If then God interfered to prove the heavenly mission of Elijah and Elisha, by recalling a dead body to life at their request, there can be no great reason to suppose, that He would not work the like miracle, to establish the credit of any other Prophet, whom it might please Him to send into the world. No evidence then against such a fact can be fairly drawn from the course of Nature in respect of the dead; the remaining question will be simply, whether the fact asserted be false or true.

THIS answer may perhaps have some weight with the Jew, who might determine, at all adventures, to retain his acknowledgement
 ment

ment of the Prophets. But modern unbelievers must be answered in another manner. They may be reminded, that the general regularity of Nature, in all her operations concerning the dead, and this instance of departure from her laws, are alike the objects of human senses. Men see and know that the dead remain passive in their graves; men also have seen and known, that Jesus Christ returned from death to life. Human evidence is admitted as conclusive in support of the first proposition, but it is refused in proof of the second. But, since the experience of any individual, during his own short abode upon earth, carries very little evidence, that the course of Nature, in respect of the dead, was always as unchangeable, as he has seen it; to conclude that a resurrection never happened, because it has not fallen under his observation, seems particularly unfair.

WHEN Articles of Faith become the objects of enquiry, it is the duty of each Christian to declare upon what proofs he is a believer, and to offer thus a reason for his own Faith. What has been now urged, appears to me sufficient to persuade all, whose unbelief does not arise rather from unreasonable prejudice, than defect of evidence.

B

THERE

THERE is therefore no reason to insist upon many other points, that meet us at our first view of the question. It is enough to observe upon the venal testimony of the Sleeping band, that they have omitted one point of evidence to finish their story. They should have testified, (and they were full as good witnesses of this fact as of the other) that the Disciples, who had stolen the remains of their Master, compleated the cheat, by re-animating His Body. Failing in this one material point, they have unfortunately left it to be concluded, that, even if the sepulchre had been robbed by the hand of Man, yet the Body of Christ, thus forcibly carried away, was raised again into life by the hand of God.

IF then, as Christians presume, the Body of their Saviour, was raised from the dead, they have a well-founded right to expect the consequences of His resurrection. Every page of that Holy Book, in which the great Worker of this Miracle, hath conveyed his promises to the Sons of Men, will afford, to all sincere enquirers, a clear conception of the advantages, which they shall hereafter enjoy, as the effects of it. They will feel their minds inflamed with affection, and
will

will break out, with St. Peter, in that rapturous exclamation, excited by this animating subject, "Blessed be the God and Father of
 "our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to
 "His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again
 "unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of
 "Christ from the dead, to an inheritance
 "incorruptible."——But the blessings, the
 "lively hope" of which is so transporting,
 are not natives of this cold world. Our present corruptible inheritance, this *σῶμα τῆς ταπεινότητος*, shall therefore be succeeded by an incorruptible state, that so, "as in the first
 "Adam all die," in the second Adam, in like manner, "all may be made alive."

IN truth, on either side, whether the resurrection of Christ be admitted or denied, there appears little necessity to bring evidence in support of the consequence. The minds of those, who have admitted the credibility of the leading fact, will hardly entertain an objection to the inference, the resurrection of the dead: and they, who deny the principal point, will be indifferent to the conclusion. Believers will readily be convinced, that, if Christ be indeed "the first fruits of them
 "that sleep," the whole harvest shall, in like manner, be consecrated — They will be as-
 B 2 fured,

sured, that he cannot properly be stiled the "first fruits" of those things, which shall not be made like him. They will be confident, that, as they are buried with him now "in the likeness of his death," they shall also be raised with him hereafter "in the likeness of his resurrection."

THESE reflections, tending to vindicate the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection, and our own, are occasioned by the general interpretation of the words of St. Paul, which stand at the head of this discourse. But if they are only thus generally explained, it is not improbable that they will be despoiled of their most important meaning. I proceed therefore to remark on them with another view, and to enquire more particularly, what may be their principal application. In the sense, hitherto assigned to them, I have been sheltered by many and great authorities; but in the following application of them, if a mistake is made, I shall, it is to be feared, have the mortification to err alone.

THE literal construction of St. Paul's words would run thus: "Who shall transfigure the body of our humiliation, that it
" may

“ may become conformal to the body of his
“ glory.”

IN this, at first view, there may perhaps appear no material variation from the tenor of the common translation; and, by a figure, much in use among the Sacred Writers, the usual version might be defended. But there is some reason to imagine, that the interpretation, now offered, either saves, or conveys more strongly, the spirit and application of this animated passage, which the admission of the figure might, it is probable, destroy or impair. For indeed, the striking contrast between the “ body of our humiliation, and the “ body of his glory,” requires to be accurately and distinctly marked.

WHAT the “ body of our humiliation” is, with respect to the nature and properties of it, may be easily discovered: but what is “ the “ body of his glory,” what is the character and fashion of it, is not so obvious.

IT would be scarcely reasonable to suppose, that this great Apostle directed the eyes of his Philippian converts to a standard, of which they were not able to form some idea: he would hardly have offered to their minds a comparison

parison of two things, unless it had been in their power to acquire some previous knowledge of both. But they, and all succeeding Christians, have enjoyed alike the liberty of drawing information, in this respect, from the same pure source. To their senses and to our own, "the body of Christ's glory" hath, in effect, appeared—the keen eye of Faith has followed him into the Mount of Vision, and beheld him there transfigured.

It is not improbable then, that the two facts may be nearly allied. An enquiry into this alliance may throw light on the question of the resurrection: and by presenting us with some material truths, respecting that miracle, may incline many to think, that the reference of the Transfiguration to it is natural and pertinent.

BUT before any inferences are made from that relation, now said to subsist between these two facts, it is fit to mention some of the reasons which may be offered in support of it.

ST. Matthew informs us, that Jesus "took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into an high mountain
" apart,

“ apart, and was transfigured before them,
 “ and his face did shine as the Sun, and his
 “ raiment was white as the light—and be-
 “ bold ! there appeared unto them Moses and
 “ Elias, talking with Him.” It is added be-
 low, “ a bright cloud overshadowed them,
 “ and behold ! a voice out of the cloud,
 “ which said, This is my beloved Son.”

ST. Mark's account contains no material difference ; that, given to us by St. Luke, in some respects, is more full and particular. We learn from him, that Moses and Elias stood ὁφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ, and that Peter, and they, that were with him, “ saw his glory,” εἶδον τὴν ΔΟΞΑΝ αὐτοῦ, namely, of Christ. From the glorious colours in which the Son of God was exhibited in this great vision, it might be, with the most emphatical propriety, denominated by St. Luke, “ his glory,” ἡ ΔΟΞΑ αὐτοῦ. And by equivalent terms, one of the Disciples, who was present in the Mount, refers to it, where he says, speaking plurally of himself, ἐποπταὶ γενηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου ΜΕΓΑΛΕΙΟΤΗΤΟΣ—and, as he proceeds, he adopts the very expression used by St. Luke : λαβὼν γὰρ, he adds, speaking of Christ, παρὰ Θεῷ Πατρὸς ΤΙΜΗΝ καὶ ΔΟΞΑΝ, Φωνῆς ἐνεχθείσης αὐτῷ τοιαύτῃ ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεπῆς δόξης.

FROM

FROM these forms of expression, in which a word, conveying a particular description, so forcibly recurs, it seems not unlikely that the words of St. Paul, σῶμα τῆς ΔΟΞΗΣ αὐτοῦ, carry in them an elevated sense, to which the common construction, "his glorious body," is inadequate, even if the strong and remarkable antithesis, before noted, between *παπεινώσεως ἡμῶν* and *δόξης αὐτοῦ*, although containing no particular reference, did not of itself demand a more distinct notice.

BUT, that the version of the passage ought faithfully to preserve this reference, will perhaps be concluded more strongly from the reasons, which further appear in support of the relation, said to subsist between the two miracles in question.

IT seems probable, that Christ did not clearly reveal his resurrection to the Disciples till after the vision. St. Mark represents the Apostles, when their Master mentioned his resurrection, as "questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." But when the Transfiguration had taken place, Christ proceeded to give public assurance, not only of his death, but also of his resurrection from the dead: and St. Matthew

thew and St. Mark, almost immediately after their description of the scene in the Mount, expressly inform us, that He began to preach his rising from the dead.

WHEN our Lord, before the Transfiguration, had casually hinted that He should “ be killed,” and that He should “ be raised again,” “ Be it far from thee, Lord,” said St. Peter; perhaps imagining, that to suffer and to die were circumstances, degrading to his Master. But the Vision in the Mount, to which he was, very soon after, admitted, gave him the fullest demonstration, how the suffering of Christ should be made compatible with his dignity. On the Mount he had the opportunity of hearing Moses and Elias, speaking “ of his decease,” τὴν ἐξοδὸν αὐτοῦ, at the mention of which he had taken offence—and also of seeing his Master clothed with that Glory, which, in his erroneous idea, would be destroyed by his suffering. Thus, according to this interpretation, the two points, on which our Lord had discoursed, that Christ should be “ killed,” and be “ raised again,” were, at once, fully revealed to this offended Disciple, the former, by the conversation of the two persons, “ who visibly appeared in glory” with him; the latter,

C

latter, by "the body of glory," which he saw then impressed upon the person of Christ.

THESE circumstances plead, perhaps strongly, in favour of a connection between this Vision and the Resurrection. But this connection seems particularly implied in the express injunction of our Lord, "tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead."

THIS restriction is repeated by St. Mark ; and St. Luke observes, that "they kept it close, and told no man, in those days, any of those things, which they had seen." The silence, which they were directed to observe "in those days," expired at a time, when it became improper not to declare openly "those things, which they had seen." For it seems, that the prohibition to relate them, "until the Son of Man should be risen from the dead," carried in it something very like a command to reveal them, when He should be risen : and why an account of the Transfiguration would come with more propriety after, than before, the Resurrection, is difficult to say, unless to tell the Vision before the Resurrection, were to make it precede that fact, with which it was connected, and which
it

it was designed to illustrate.—These reasons, strengthened, as they may perhaps appear, by what will follow, lead me to imagine, that to explain the Resurrection by the Transfiguration, will be to apply that Vision to one of the purposes, for which it was intended.

I PROCEED therefore to point out some consequences of that application, which has been thus defended: We will suppose then that point admitted, with which this discourse began, the resurrection of our Lord—let the consequence of it, our own resurrection, be taken as granted also; then immediately follows the very important question, “how are the dead raised up, and with “what body do they come?” That they are raised at all, the antient Sadducees denied: but by modern objectors another course has been taken. The Resurrection of the Body has been admitted, but made to suit a philosophical maxim, that the same man may hereafter again subsist, without the re-union of the same body to the same soul. The first objection, that there is no resurrection at all, may be left without notice, there being little probability that it will be admitted by many, or, at least, openly avowed. But the last ob-

jection is pointed with much subtlety, and must be obviated, before the remarks to be offered on the scene in the Mount, can have any weight.

IT cannot be denied, that the human body dies, and that it “fees corruption;” and, if there be a resurrection of the dead, that it cannot consist in any thing, except the rescue of that human body from corruption. To fancy, with some, the resurrection of an alien unburied body, would be to admit an absurdity, such as must be implied in a contradiction of terms. The credibility of the resurrection therefore cannot be admitted imperfectly, without an insult to common reason. It is either absolutely false, or positively true in the utmost latitude: and either God will not interpose at all to work this miracle, or, that same mouldering substance, “fast bound” by death in the grave, shall “hear his voice” “and come forth.”

A RESURRECTION of this sort, and with such circumstances as these, is referred to by the Prophets in their usual exalted language; “Your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish, like an herb, saith Isaiah, “and the hand of the Lord shall be known
“towards

“ towards his servants.” Ezekiel speaks more plainly—that in the Spirit of the Lord, he saw “ a valley full of bones, and there was a
 “ noise, and behold! a shaking, and the bones
 “ came together, bone to his bone, the fi-
 “ news and the flesh came upon them, and
 “ the skin covered them above, and their
 “ breath came into them, and they lived,
 “ and stood upon their feet.” The resurrection of the body, and of the same body, seem then to be ideas, that do not admit of a possible separation.

BUT this difficulty will hamper some philosophical principles, of which many have been scrupulously tenacious. Attempts have therefore been made, either to remove, or cut through it. If it be indeed true, as some insinuate, that the consciousness of the soul, which inhabits the body, is a sufficient constituent of sameness, then, even upon this venturesome principle, a resurrection cannot be made out, unless the soul itself be mortal, which few will be hardy enough to affirm. They, who take such consciousness as proof of identity, might, it should seem, not unsuccessfully repair to the illustrious heathen of Samos for better information; even his error would, so far, instruct them. He would
 tell

tell them, that although his soul, had retained her consciousness, under three successive bodies, yet that he felt, and nominally distinguished himself, as a different person under them all. Identity of man can never be preserved, unless by retaining that union of matter and spirit, of body and soul, which always enter into the composition of human nature: and until we learn, how to separate substances without breaking their union, we shall be obliged, if we admit a resurrection at all, to expect the re-union of that compound subsistence, which must form the identity of man.

BUT here another objection stands in the way, which by some has been strongly enforced. The changeful and corruptible body of man, when by death subjected to the lowest state of corruption, passes rapidly into numberless, and perhaps still more perishable, atoms, till they, having been continually hurried through various stages of consistence, are at length confounded in an abyss of matter, or totally evaporated. But to such objectors, the voice of reason will cry, Silence and Shame! — Who will venture to affirm, that God will not, or if He will, that He cannot, exert as much power in restoring, as He daily
exerts

exerts in preserving, the identity of man? For it ought not to be forgotten, that, in a transitory and perishable being, such as is that of man, "never," as Holy Writ emphatically describes him, "continuing in one stay," his identity can in no wise be made out upon philosophical, that is, upon absolute and perfect principles. And yet, the common sense of mankind offers no objection to the identity of man, while he lives, and holds out in his own person a striking confutation of that idea, upon which some have ventured to define it. An humble mind may acquiesce in a negative notion of identity, because, as it seems, in a fading state, and in respect of a frail being, who "dies daily," none of a positive kind can be formed. "Quod non est aliud, est idem," may very possibly be a safe maxim, and such as will conduct an enquirer into the nature of the Resurrection, as far as human understanding can penetrate.

ALL these observations, and many more to the like purpose, will be strongly confirmed, if that application of St. Paul's words, of which it remains to speak more particularly, be well founded.

THE Text sets forth, that in consequence
of

of that power, which shall “ transfigure,” *μεταχηματίσθαι*, the “ body of our humiliation,” a likeness to Christ’s “ body of glory” shall be induced, and made to supersede our former fashion, *χήματι ἔσώματος ἡμῶν*. We seem obliged to infer from these words, that “ Christ’s body of glory” is the archetype, to which our raised, and therefore transfigured, body shall be conformed. But if, as the Scripture every where teaches, our bodies shall again live, only in consequence of the miracle, that Christ’s body was previously raised, it will with reason be expected, that the raised body of man, should, as before observed, be the likeness of the raised body of Christ. Was therefore, it will now be asked, the raised body of Christ, the body of his glory? This question is in this place so very important, that it demands a direct answer. The body, which our Lord carried back into life, was that, which he had borne about before his death, and was the same in which he had been “ transfigured”—it was indeed his body, but naked, and stript of glory. For the fact of his identity was so very material, that it alone required absolute demonstration; and nothing could fully ascertain it, but the most palpable assurance. It was therefore necessary, that Christ should plainly

plainly shew himself in substance, nature, and fashion, the same individual, which the senses of men had always represented him. For this cause his wounds were made to remain on his body—For this cause he shewed himself subject to his former infirmities, as still material and passible. He received, at his own request, from the hands of his Disciples, “ a piece of a broiled fish and an “ honey-comb, and did eat before them.” What could be the consequence of such exhibitions of himself, but the certainty, that “ the Lord was risen indeed ?” But when he thus manifested himself, for the purpose of convincing the Apostles that he was risen, what marks or impressions of glory were then distinguishable on his person? Having carried to the grave *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, did he then, when raised, appear to have brought back *σῶμα πνευματικόν*?

WHEN Mary saw him in the garden, there was nothing about his appearance, that did not justify her in supposing him to be the gardener; she knew him, as it seems, by his voice. The two Disciples in the road saw nothing in his person, but what would very well suit the character of a “ stranger at Jerusalem.” They would assuredly have

D known

known him, if their eyes had not been "holden." Indeed, it was impossible for the keenest senses to discover a difference, between what Christ then was, and what he had been—and therefore the end of his continuance upon earth, after his resurrection, was fully answered; incontestable evidence was thus given, that his body was delivered from the bonds of death. But this body of Christ was only so far glorious, as the triumph over death had made it, but it was not "his body of glory," referred to in the Text.

ST. Matthew informs us, that the eleven Disciples, probably upon the message delivered to the women, who were returned from the sepulchre, went up "into a mountain of Galilee, where Jesus had appointed them"—it may be to the very place, where he had been transfigured, and "there they saw and worshipped him." There were three of the number, who, if the body of Christ, then exhibited to their senses, was not the same, which had been cloathed with glory in the mount, were, as it must be supposed, capable of detecting the difference. But there was indeed no difference—it is certain that Christ did retain the same body, although unadorned.

adorned with that fashion of glory, with which they had seen it arrayed. The Disciples, who had been favored with a sight of his former appearance in glory, being at length assured of his resurrection from the dead, were bound to "tell the vision" to their brethren, who were now also become capable of understanding, and applying it properly. And from that application a system of evidence would arise, too strong and decisive to be resisted, and no doubt would remain, either that the dead are raised up, or "with what body" they do come.

WHEN Christ led up the three Disciples into the mount, a perfect knowledge of his person and fashion was, no doubt, impressed on their senses—the same knowledge of him subsisted, during the continuance of the vision, and after it. It is evident, that they distinguished their Master, from the two, who appeared in the mount with him: and there seems reason enough to conclude, that they, and St. Peter in particular, distinguished the two Prophets from each other. If this supposition be true, we seem obliged to confess, that in the persons of them all, there remained that portion of absolute identity, which was necessary to convince the Disci-

D 2

ples,

ples, even although their earthly, by this heavenly overpowered, was "heavy with sleep," that the three great persons, whom they saw, were the same, to whom the titles of Jesus, Moses, and Elias, had been always severally assigned.

AGAIN: we read that the fashion of Christ's countenance was changed, "and that "his raiment became white as snow." Not only his raiment, but also his features and person, passed under an extraordinary change. The change was attended with such splendid marks of glory, that it wrought on the beholders the most awful impression, "for "they were sore afraid." These strange sensations had not affected them, before the commencement of the vision, and when the glorious appearance ceased, the effects, which it had wrought on them, expired also: "they "looked round, and saw Jesus standing alone "with themselves." Their senses, from the time of ascending into the mount, to the instant of descending from it, had observed enough of their Master, to distinguish accurately the two several changes made in him, when he put on glory, and when he laid that glory down: and, even when Christ was clothed with his body of glory, they hailed him,

him, Lord, and Master, as knowing him to be the same person, whom they had always honoured with those titles. — The conclusion in this respect seems obvious, that Christ's form of glory was assumed, and continued on his person, without destroying his identity : or in other words, that even under a change from bodily humiliation to bodily glory, he appeared substantially the same. And we ought to conclude in like manner of the persons of Moses and Elias.

FURTHER : it is possible, that the difference of that glory, which was stamped upon the Prophets, who stood with Christ in the mount, might be sufficiently striking to distinguish them from the great One. But it does not appear that this difference was so signal, as to affect, in any forcible and lively manner, the senses of the Disciples. On the contrary, the likeness between the three appearances of glory, induced St. Peter to form similar notions of them all : “ Let us “ build here three tabernacles, he cried, one “ for Thee, one for Moses, and one for “ Elias,” intending, as it seems, to pay them all an equal honor.—Here then, on this holy mount, were exhibited to the eyes of the Apostles, mere men, like themselves, wearing

ing a glorified form, like to that fashion of glory, in which their Lord then appeared : they saw *σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν, μεταχρηματιζόμενον, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι συμμορφὸν σώματι τῆς ΔΟΞΗΣ αὐτῆς*, so transfigured as to be conformal to the body of his glory.

ONCE more : it should be remembered, that one of the two Prophets, who appeared in glory on the mount, “ had never seen “ death”—and as, in the person of Moses, the buried part of mankind are represented under an assumed body of glory, so also, in the person of Elias, the like representation was made of those, who should be found alive, and remain unto Christ’s coming. In one word ; a change from humiliation to glory subsisted in this vision, without destroying the personal identity of any, who submitted to it : and this change was the copy of that fashion, which was seen in the body of Christ’s glory ; and it was exhibited in persons, who could severally stand as the proper representatives of men, quick and dead,

THUS we are enabled to comprehend more fully the reasoning of St. Paul on the resurrection of the body, “ It is sown a natural “ body, it is raised a spiritual body—it is
“ sown

“ sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory”—
 and “ as we have borne,” in our body of hu-
 miliation, “ the image of the earthy, we shall
 “ also bear,” in the body of our glory, “ the
 “ image of the heavenly,” *ἡ ἐπικρανὶς*, of him
 that is in heaven, for “ flesh and blood can-
 “ not inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

AND now all objections to the credibility
 of the resurrection of the same body seem to
 lose their effect. This great vision will in-
 form men, that it is very possible to the hand
 of Omnipotence so to modify matter, as to
 induce change, without destroying identity,
 and to preserve the sameness of a body of hu-
 miliation, even when it is transfigured to a
 body of glory. These seeming contrarieties
 having once been thus visibly reconciled by
 the “ mighty working” of God, who also
 has promised in Scripture to raise the body,
 it seems to be the duty of man, to rest assured,
 that, at the resurrection, identity and change
 shall be made consistent again.

FROM what has been said, it appears cer-
 tain, that the article of the Christian church,
 asserting the resurrection of the body, that is,
 as it claims to be understood, of the same
 body, is Scriptural, and therefore true. It
 seems

seems moreover to result from the comparison, now made between these two important facts, that it was one great end of the transfiguration of Christ, to give ample information in respect of the resurrection; and to prevent mistakes, which might be, and partly have been, made in that point of doctrine, by arguments drawn from that body of Christ, in which he appeared after his resurrection, which was not, truly and positively, his body of glory.

AND now, with what pity will the Christian philosopher look back upon the sages of the heathen world, hurried from one wild and fantastic opinion to another, without finding any point, on which even their own minds could fix with satisfaction? He will cast a sorrowful retrospect to those ages of error, when the existence of God was doubted or denied, and Chance was set up in his place, as a being, fit to govern, and able to support, the world, perhaps even to eternity. He will not wonder, that even the nature of man should, in those days, be utterly unknown. But while he pities, he will, at the same time, venerate those good men, who attempted, in that age of ignorance, to correct and reform the opinions of mankind. They com-
bated,

bated, he will observe, many popular errors, and by dispersing their own improved systems, endeavoured to lead the minds of men to a better conception of moral and physical truth. But, in regard to moral truth, the foundation, upon which they were obliged to build, was necessarily weak and insecure. Instead of conviction and certainty, which alone can justify any opinions, they could substitute only probability and conjecture. After the most industrious and extensive enquiry; after having consulted the priests of Egypt and other countries, even the Samian sage returned unable to comprehend the nature of man. In his notions of the soul, he was strangely visionary; in respect of the body, he was utterly uninformed.

THE body, it was certainly known, must die; men lived, according to the philosophical language of the times, *φθαρτὸν κειτημένον σῶμα*. It was then a very obvious idea, that, after death, the body would be lost for ever in the mass of that corruptible matter, which originally composed it. Accordingly, as it appears, the Samian philosopher proceeded upon this notion, and, after the separation of the soul from it, left the body unregarded. He assigned the same soul successively to dif-

E

ferent

ferent bodies by his fanciful theory of transmigration, which was adopted by many of his followers, and admitted, in part, by the Pharisees, in the time of our Lord. Indeed a total disregard to the body seems to be the principle upon which this doctrine was founded. And, if the body, as he probably thought, had no better concern in the composition of human nature, than to lend a vehicle to the soul in a temporal state, it was not indeed of any consequence, how many successive bodies the soul should, upon any hypothesis, be fancied to inhabit. It is indeed true, that this philosopher held the doctrine of a future life; and this idea was defended by none of his followers more warmly, than it was by him, whom the oracle pronounced wisest of men. The most lofty effusions of his great scholar, are nevertheless only speculations on the Immortality of the Soul.

THE meditations upon death, which some antient sages have left behind them, breathe indeed a spirit and energy, that may seem extraordinary for the feelings of heathens: but they appear to rest upon a very defective principle. That death will deliver man from human evil, is indeed no more than a negative benefit; and that it will rescue a free and heavenly

heavenly soul from the gross servitude, to which it is subjected by the body, is indeed the truth, although not the whole truth. But their footing must have been unsure, if they had ventured further. They were not authorized to contemplate death, as carrying the soul to a better state of being, in which it might happily subsist in union with the body, purified from those carnal tendencies, which had before made it the impediment of the soul. This was a scene, discoverable only by the enlightened eye of Faith, and, of course, "far above out of the sight" of heathen moralists.

WE are certain that the resurrection of Christ has cleared up all human doubts, by making the two distant periods, now and hereafter, to pass under our view; and by exhibiting as clear a prospect of the fashion and form of man under the latter of these periods, as human senses enjoy under the former.

THE Christian sage may therefore take his stand as upon a rock, and contemplate the present and future scene of things with calmness and security. Being assured, that his present existence shall be followed by an eternity

nity of happiness, he has learned to look upon death without dismay. He will be vigilant in preserving that interest, which is given to him in a better world. He will labour, to maintain the purity of his soul, that it may be more highly prepared to relish the sweet of heavenly happiness; and to worship the Lord with an unpolluted body, that it may hereafter, with slightest alteration, admit a glorified form.



F I N I S.